Perceptions of Engaging with a Super-Strengths Approach in Elite Sport

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## PERCEPTIONS OF SUPER-STRENGTHS APPROACH

### Raw Data Themes

- I believed that I could be one of the best in the world
  - It's really important for your confidence, to know I am genuinely good at something.
  - It gives you that bit of chest back feeling, that I am good.
  - It gives you a bit of self-importance.
  - It’s nice knowing that actually yeah I think I am better than you at this.
  - There is always that inner belief in yourself.
  - It has had a big impact on my confidence.
  - It gave me confidence to believe I could compete at an Olympic games.
  - The best thing about super strengths is the confidence it gives you.

- They see something in you and it makes you feel a bit special.
  - I think it gives you more confidence because someone believes in you.
  - Knowing that you have this one thing that people see in you makes you feel good.

- It gives you more confidence because you’re concentrating on what you are good at.
  - It makes you feel really good focusing on the positives.
  - The positivity that comes from working on strengths makes a difference.
  - It really makes you feel good knowing you are working on something you’re good at.

- Super strengths is linked to confidence as it reminds you of your edge.
  - You know that you have something that it is better than anyone else.
  - If they can’t read what I’m going to do, I’ll always have the upper hand on my serve.
  - It gave me a weapon that other players worried about.
  - It gave me an aura, because people knew that I could lead the race and still win, and people had thought you couldn’t do that.
  - It adds relentless pressure to opponents when they know you have a super strength.
  - Other players fear you - when you believe someone fears you, you don’t fear them.
  - It gives me a huge advantage over anyone else because nobody is winning that many points.

- It gives me more confidence going into matches.
  - I had more confidence in leading my races.
  - When I raced, I raced a lot more confidently.
  - I felt more confident in my method going out there.
  - It’s very simple playing to your super strengths; it’s a very big confidence thing.
  - It gives you more belief in yourself to go for the shots, more belief you can do it.
  - I feel confident that I will make the right decisions around the super strengths.
  - Knowing what works for you and that gives you the confidence to go out and race.
  - I knew that I would always be able to deliver those super strengths.
  - Believing I could deliver a game that could get me to the Olympics and win us a medal made a big impact on my performance.

- Your confidence is sky high because you know you have done everything you could do to prepare for the comp.
  - It’s that confidence that you’ve put the right programme together for the vision.
  - We knew we had done the hard work, full of confidence to go and execute.
  - I had a lot more belief after putting it into practice.
  - It gives you confidence once you have done it, and you have seen.
  - If I am working on my strengths in training, I am going to be building confidence.
  - It’s the knowledge and understanding that you have shown you can produce it that gives you confidence.
  - Knowing that you just need to do what you have been doing gives you an untouchable confidence.

- It gave a lot of players a lot of confidence in our team.
  - I could see that everyone had the confidence that they would just do their job.
  - We believe that our team has that extra edge.
  - I didn’t doubt at any point that we would win as we all knew what each of us was going to deliver.
  - Even when losing we still have this confidence that if we bring our super strengths out we will win.
  - As a team it gives you inner confidence, there is no doubt about it.
  - Standing up and telling each other what it was we brought to the team created a real confident environment and a real energy.

### Lower Order Themes

- **Self-belief**
- **Others’ belief**
- **Positive focus**
- **Edge on others**
- **Competition confidence**
- **Preparation**
- **Team confidence**

### Higher Order Themes

- **Confidence**
PERCEPTIONS OF SUPER-STRENGTHS APPROACH

Raw Data Themes

Lower Order Themes

Higher Order themes

I think there was a shift in emphasis from weaknesses to strengths
It changes where you look for improvement
It is different to the traditional way of always looking at weaknesses to get better
Traditionally we always worked on weaknesses, this was different
I think it is quite rare in sport for coaches to tell you that you are really good at this
Working on my super strength was a big change from what I was used to
It was a first for me, working on weaknesses not being the focus
It changed what I think about what we look at when trying to improve
It wasn’t like what I had done before
It’s very good as it gives you a new way of thinking

I am much more focused when playing games in training
It gives you more of a focus and purpose in training
You go out to training with areas you want to focus on around your super strengths
It gives you structure to your practice
There was a clear focus in training to implement my strengths in the session
It gives you a plan to work on in training

It provides a simple strong message which is what a team needs
It can give you a clear method for performing
It helps you really establish your method for performance
It is about clear messages, clear goals and focusing
It provides a much clearer methodology about how you score your runs
It gave me a real focused game plan of what I set out to do in a match
It helps you just focus on one or a couple of things when performing
It gives you a way of focusing your game on something
It is your thing you bring to the team so you feel part of the cog in the wheel.
Everyone has a super strength and so everyone has a part to play.

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Mind-set shift

Training focus

Strategy for competition

Default method

Goal direction

You know where you are going once you have a super strength to work on
Immediately it gives you focus and direction
I think it gives me a focus
It gives you a target, as in something you can always work towards no matter what
It gives you much more clarity than trying to improve on lots of things
It made me practice more, deliberately thinking of my way to succeed
There was a real mental shift trying to be a bit more proactive on the court
I think it just gives you a clear focus, knowing what you are going to work on.
It gives you focus and direction for improving

Clarity of purpose
PERCEPTIONS OF SUPER-STRENGTHS APPROACH

I think it changes your mind-set to keep pushing throughout
I felt so inspired with this new idea.
It gives you a bit more of a ‘get up and go’ sort of feeling
It makes you think it’s worth giving it a go
It makes you excited to go train the things you are good at.
I would be more inclined to make myself pretty tired in training
It gives you a good reason to go out when it’s freezing!
A strength is usually something you enjoy, so it’s more fun to work on.
Reassurance from coach about your super strength before the day means you can get excited to perform

It gives you something good to focus on when you’re having a bad day
When the pressure is on this gives you that focus and with that your performance improves.
It actually takes a bit of pressure off knowing they don’t want you to be perfect at everything
I think you just feel freer because you are not worried about making mistakes
I don’t worry so much on the day
It positively changes your expectations in the times you aren’t doing well

The only danger is that because something has worked you say like OK well let’s just do that all the time!
I came a bit of a one trick pony because I tried to do it every time
It’s about working out when this works for you, otherwise you can become a bit obsessed on it
It has to complement the other stuff you’re doing, it’s not the only thing you do
The danger in a team is that sometimes you might rely on an individual to bring their super strength
If you struggle to get my super strength out, you might race a bit more negatively

I got so fit so I could get to the front and then I had an opportunity to medal
We have had our best outcomes since working in this way
I won my first world cup event this year which was a while after we had started doing this
It made me the best player in the world for a while
It’s what I am better than others at and it gives me a better chance to win.
I am playing better and at the highest level more often, not dipping like I would before
Performance wise I got stronger using my super-strengths

Figure 1. Higher-order, lower-order and raw data themes representing athletes’ perceptions of the effects of the super-strengths approach.